GAY CLUB: Students have forum for discussion

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cials turned down their request for a school-sanctioned Gay/Straight Alliance club.

Lewis-Palmer Principal Keith Jacobus said he was concerned in January 2002 when a couple of his students were determined to start a group focused on gay issues.

"As a principal, you always have to take a look at what's going on in the school, with parents and in the community," he said. "It can be difficult."

He worried some students might ostracize club members and that parents would worry their kids were attending a high school endorsing a group in which sexual orientation was the bedrock topic.

"At first there were some concern," Jacobus said. "But none of that happened. There hasn't been any trouble."

The group occasionally will have a guest speaker or do an activity in the school community, but the club mainly offers a chance for the students to get together and talk.

"It gives the kids an opportunity to talk about issues and to show their human-ness rather than their gayness," said Tim O'Conner, the club's sponsor at Lewis-Palmer. "They're more like other students than they are different."

"It's worked out well. Those kids have another avenue to feel a part of the school," Jacobus said.

The ACLU had threatened to sue on the grounds the school was discriminating against the Gay/Straight Alliance after sanctioning a number of clubs, including a Christian athletes group.

Eleven days after the ACLU sent its letter, Lewis-Palmer recognized the club as an official school group.

The lawsuit filed Dec. 12 against Palmer High School deals with similar issues.

Colorado Springs School District 11 based its rejection of the club's application on a standard adopted in 1995 requiring student clubs to be directly related to the curriculum.

The ACLU argues the district has recognized clubs that aren't directly related to the curriculum, such as the Chess Club, and courts bar the district from discriminating against others.

"Once all the hoopla subsides, these clubs throughout the states become an integral part of the school's life just like any other club," said Michael Brewer, director of the Colorado Legal Initiatives Project.

About 1,200 Gay/Straight Alliance clubs are registered in the country, according to Lambda Legal, a national organization advocating civil rights for gays and lesbians.

"In Colorado, more than 50 clubs are operating without controversy," said Mark Silverstein, legal director of the Colorado ACLU.

Gay club had rough start, but gained acceptance

By BRENT PATTERSON
THE GAZETTE

The biggest furor the Gay/Straight Alliance club has caused at Lewis-Palmer High School was when it was proposed.

The proposal caused a five-month standoff between school staff and club proponents. It ended when a threatened lawsuit against the Monument school led officials to allow the club.

Nearly two years after the club was created, the Lewis-Palmer principal said he's glad it's there. He understands, however, the dilemma officials at Palmer High School in Colorado Springs face with a proposal to start a similar group there.

The American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit this month on behalf of seven Palmer students after school offi-

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oh so I said, 'Are you a carpet layer?' She said, 'Well, whatever.'"

Another woman called and told Cole she could do the job, and that her husband was at work during the day.

"I thought that was odd, so I asked her if she had a kicker and an iron and she just hung up," Cole said.

Still another caller said she had two friends and asked if they could split the job into three one-hour sessions. "'Would that work for you?' she asked me," Cole said, laughing. "I just hung up."

The one man who called sounded confused when Cole started talking about carpet.

The ad was printed correctly for the next edition of the paper and the apartment unit has been carpeted. It is now listed in the classifieds — with no typos or misprints.

Ramseys hope I

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DENVER • A sample of male DNA found in JonBenet Ramsey's underwear has been submitted to FBI investigators seven years after she was slain in her parents' home, the Ramsey family attorney said Friday.

"The Ramseys have a lot of hope that the DNA will solve the case,"